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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Georgia Department of Human Services partners with Bright from the Start:  
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning to launch a comprehensive quality  
improvement initiative for child care providers**

**ATLANTA, Ga., (February 9, 2010)** – Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) has teamed up with Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (Bright from the Start) to offer a new, comprehensive quality improvement program to selected child care providers throughout the state. Using stimulus funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), DHS and Bright from the Start will provide a tailored package of inclusive technical assistance and support to providers. This will help ensure that every early care and learning program in the state is of the highest quality possible.

The joint initiative will begin in February and run through September 2011. It is designed to provide a year and a half of rigorous assistance to approximately 600 non-compliant child care programs receiving subsidies in Georgia.

“This is an exciting and unprecedented project for both agencies,” stated Bright from the Start Commissioner Holly A. Robinson. “Our combined goal is to substantially impact and raise the bar on the quality of care and learning that Georgia’s youngest children are receiving.”

“We will see the effects of this initiative long after the ARRA program has ended,” said Department of Human Services Commissioner B.J. Walker. “This initiative not only levels the playing field for all parents, regardless of their income level, but it also changes the standards for childcare in Georgia forever.”

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According to Bright from the Start's Child Care Services Division Director Kay Hellwig, this initiative focuses on sustaining compliance and increasing the quality of child care programs.

“One of the key pieces of this project is the formation of ten, three-member teams from each division within our agency,” said Hellwig, who is serving as the project's leader. “They are charged with providing child care programs with concentrated technical assistance as well as support with accessing community resources.”

Specifically, the project will offer the following:

- One-on-one technical assistance
- Training
- Online learning
- Safety and compliance coaching
- Professional development for all staff
- Monetary support and progress evaluation

Once providers have successfully completed the project and sustained compliance, their program will receive a one-time monetary bonus of \$1,500 to enhance equipment and materials in their child care learning center or family daycare home. When the program ends in 2011, the agencies will conduct a joint review of the results.

“Together with Commissioner Walker's team, this project will help Georgia's providers deliver higher levels of quality care that will result in a stronger educational foundation for thousands of our youngest citizens,” said Robinson.

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Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).